

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as shown below. The listing of the claims below replaces all prior versions of the claims.

Listing of the Claims:**What is claimed:**

1. (Currently Amended) A method for purifying a polyhistidine-tagged cytokine ~~(tagged protein)~~ from a protein preparation, comprising:
 - (a) concentrating the tagged protein in the protein preparation with a negatively charged capture support, wherein the negatively charged capture support comprises heparin, comprising the steps of:
 - (i) contacting the protein preparation with the capture support;
 - (ii) washing the capture support with a capture support washing buffer of low ionic strength to remove interfering molecules but not the tagged protein from the capture support; and
 - (iii) eluting the tagged protein from the capture support with a capture support eluting buffer of high ionic strength;
 - (b) purifying the tagged protein from the eluate of step (a) (iii) with a tag-specific affinity support, wherein the tag-specific affinity support comprises nickel nitrilotriacetic acid, comprising the steps of:
 - (i) contacting the eluate of step (a) (iii) with the tag-specific affinity support;
 - (ii) washing the affinity support with affinity support washing buffer of low ionic strength to remove some impurities but not the tagged protein from the affinity support; and
 - (iii) eluting the tagged protein from the affinity support with an affinity support eluting buffer.
2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the capture support washing buffer and the affinity support washing buffer comprise an ionic strength equivalent to about 50 mM to about 150 mM salt equivalent.

3. (Original) The method of claim 2, wherein the capture support eluting buffer comprises an ionic strength equivalent to at least about 500 mM salt equivalent.

4. (Original) The method of claim 3, wherein the capture support is applied to a column before or after contacting with the protein preparation.

5. (Original) The method of claim 3, wherein the affinity support is applied to a column before or after contacting with the eluate of the capture support.

6.-9. (Canceled)

10. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 3[9], wherein ~~the immobilized metal affinity chromatography support comprises nickel nitrilotriacetic acid, and wherein~~ the affinity support eluting buffer comprises at least 50 mM imidazole.

11. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 10, wherein the polyhistidine-tagged cytokine~~(protein)~~ is a 6x histidine tagged cytokine with a four-helix bundle motif.

12.-16. (Canceled)

17. (Original) A method for purifying a polyhistidine-tagged cytokine with a four-helix bundle motif from a protein preparation, comprising:

(a) concentrating the tagged protein in the protein preparation with a negatively charged capture support, wherein the negatively charged capture support comprises heparin, comprising the steps of:

- (i) contacting the protein preparation with the capture support;
- (ii) washing the capture support with a capture support washing buffer of an ionic strength equivalent to a concentration of about 50 mM to about 1 M to remove interfering molecules but not the tagged protein from the capture support; and
- (iii) eluting the tagged protein from the capture support with a capture support eluting buffer of an ionic strength equivalent to a concentration of about 50 mM to about 1 M;

(b) purifying the tagged protein from the eluate of step (a) (iii) with a tag-specific affinity support, wherein the affinity support comprises nickel nitrilotriacetic acid immobilized on a solid support, comprising the steps of:

- (i) contacting the eluate of step (a) (iii) with the affinity support;
- (ii) washing the affinity support with affinity support washing buffer of an ionic strength equivalent to a concentration of about 50 mM to about 1 M to remove some impurities but not the tagged protein from the affinity support; and
- (iii) eluting the tagged protein from the affinity support with an affinity support eluting buffer comprising at least 50 mM imidazole.

18.-24. (Canceled)